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Viewing cable 07CAIRO2801, DEFENSE MINISTER TANTAWI ON MIL-TO-MIL RELATIONS

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#07CAIRO2801**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
07CAIRO2801	2007-09-16 15:37	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Cairo

Appears in these articles:

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SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER TANTAWI ON MIL-TO-MIL RELATIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Francis J. Ricciardone for reasons
1.4(b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) On September 16, Minister of Defense Field Marshal Tantawi and the Ambassador discussed the impact of the FMF debates on the overall relationship, the state of mil-to-mil relations, border security, the under-disbursement of FMF in FY07, and the peace process. Tantawi said that the U.S. and Egypt must work to strengthen the mil-to-mil relationship despite occasional differences on individual issues. He also

warned that Egypt's history with colonialism, occupation and war still impacts Egypt's foreign relations. On border security, Tantawi reiterated his long-standing request to deploy and equip another unit of Border Guard Forces (BGF) to counter smuggling on the Gaza border. Assistant Minister of Defense MG Fouad abd el Halim said that factors out of Egypt's control led to the under-disbursement of FMF this year, but predicted that Egypt would spend all available funding in FY08. The Ambassador encouraged Egypt to play a strong and supportive role as the U.S. works to advance the peace process. (Note: Just two hours after the meeting, MG Fouad advised us that the Minister has ordered that all border security-related procurement be placed at the top of Egypt's prioritized list of cases for FY08. End note.) End summary.

FMF: The Ten-year Package and Conditioning FMF

¶2. (C) Minister of Defense Field Marshal Tantawi told the Ambassador on September 16 that the mil-to-mil relationship had always been the leading component of the broader bilateral relationship and said, with some lament, "I don't know what happened." The Ambassador highlighted BRIGHT STAR and the MCC as opportunities for positive engagement and reaffirmed the Administration's commitment to sustaining FMF at USD 1.3 billion for another ten years beginning in FY09. The Ambassador also reminded Tantawi that Senate Appropriations staff member Paul Grove told the Minister in July 2007 that the FMF amount is not sacred -- it is not guaranteed and could be adjusted up or down -- and that there must be a solid annual justification for the assistance. Commenting on the decision to increase FMF for Israel, Tantawi said "my advice is that the U.S. should maintain a balance;" the "main job of the Embassy," in his view, is to convince Congress of the importance and uniqueness of the relationship with Egypt. Assistant Minister of Defense for Armament MG Fouad abd el Halim also said the U.S. should maintain the traditional 3-to-2 assistance ratio between Israel and Egypt.

¶3. (C) Tantawi said that the assistance debates impact not only the military and other government officials, but also the Egyptian people, who are "intelligent and sensitive." Referring to the 2007 amendment by Representative Obey, Tantawi said that "those in Congress who would try to pressure Egypt through the military on issues regarding the judiciary, police or borders should know this will not work." President Mubarak was very angry about this development, Tantawi explained -- it was carried out as though Egypt is weak and can be ordered to do things. "It could have been handled another way," he said, again highlighting the sensitivity of the Egyptian people to what they perceive as foreign interference. Tantawi then recounted that when he was a boy, a British officer ordered him to leave the public sidewalk in central Cairo and to cross the street so as to be out of the way. "This was in my own country," Tantawi said; "I was not doing anything wrong." "Colonialism, the wars and Israeli occupation of Sinai are historic issues that we can't leave behind."

Mil-to-Mil Cooperation

¶4. (C) The Ambassador and Tantawi acknowledged that there are issues in the mil-to-mil relationship on which the U.S. and Egypt differ. Tantawi said that at times "circumstances will not allow us to be flexible," but he urged the Ambassador to advise him of issues in which the U.S. would like more cooperation. Tantawi recalled a 1977 incident in which he was the Defense Attache in Islamabad when Egypt's Minister of Defense, who was passing through Islamabad, learned that China claimed not to have MIG parts that Egypt's Minister of Defense had requested. Tantawi approached his U.S. counterpart for guidance on how to handle the "impossible" explanation by the Chinese, and said that "within hours" the U.S. contact had provided him a full list of all of the parts the U.S. knew the Chinese would have.

15. (C) Border security, the Ambassador said, remains a high priority for the USG, and asked the Minister to increase to 750 the number of Border Guard Forces (BGF) on the border with Gaza and to do everything else possible to stem smuggling. Tantawi repeated his long-standing request that Israel agree to allow Egypt to deploy another border guard unit (with equipment), noting that the current number of troops is insufficient to patrol the 14 kilometer border with Gaza, and even less the 28 kilometer Mediterranean Sea coast of Zone C. "Israeli PM Olmert promised me last year that he would work on this," Tantawi said, but nothing came of it. "Instead of tying our hands behind our backs and then demanding that we do something," Tantawi said that the Israelis should explain how they would do a better job on the border. (Note: MG Fouad called poloff after the meeting to report that the Minister had ordered that all border security-related procurement cases be ranked as the highest priority cases for FY08. End note).

FMF Management

16. (C) The Ambassador cautioned that the FY07 under-disbursement of FMF must be addressed quickly. MG Fouad explained that he is confident that with a Financial Management Review (FMR) in early 2008, the U.S. and Egypt will succeed in scheduling disbursement of over USD 2 billion in FY08 to make up for the shortfall in FY07. Egypt cannot control most of the factors that cause the problem, Fouad said. Poorly performing cases, State's slow processing of 36b congressional notifications for the Beechcraft, Stingers, APCs and M1A1, and the fact that the services have held over "200 Letters of Request" (all still requiring Letters of Acceptance) have all led to a shortfall in FY07 spending. Although Egypt has only spent 900 million thus far in FY07, Fouad said, MoD expects nonetheless to spend USD 1.1 billion by Oct. 1. Fouad promised to present at the FMR a complete list of prioritized cases (already approved by the Field Marshal) for FY08.

Peace Process

17. (C) The Ambassador stressed the importance of Egypt's support for the U.S. efforts to advance the peace process, always a matter at the core of the U.S.-Egyptian partnership. Lately, however, Egypt's role has appeared more passive than that of other Arabs, including the Palestinians themselves.
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